SHANAHAN LANDSCAPING

Spring 2025 Newsletter

Flowers - Perfect & Imperfect

by Mike Shanahan

"Perfect." Have you heard someone say that before during a conversation when something was done right or everybody was able to coordinate their schedules? Depending on the context it's used in, perfect can have different meanings.

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, one of the definitions of perfect is the following: in a state of undiminished or highest excellence; without defect; flawless. In plant terms, perfect flowers are those that have male and female characteristics versus imperfect flowers, which are either male or female.

Three examples of plants with perfect flowers are Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Forsythia (*Forsythia*), and Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*).
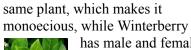

Two examples of plants with imperfect flowers are English Walnut (*Juglans regia*) and Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*). English Walnut has separate male and female flowers on the same plant, which makes it monoecious, while Winterberry has male and female flowers on different plants, making it dioecious.

Perfect or imperfect, many flowering plants can provide year-round interest, beauty, and environmental benefits to our landscapes, nature, and communities.

Native Plant of the Season

Bringing it Home with Native Plants!

Piedmont Azalea (*Rhododendron canescens*)

- ❀ Pink-white, fragrant flowers early spring
- ❀ Looks great in woodland gardens and natural settings
- ❀ Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds
- ❀ Green leaves that turn shades of red during fall when conditions are right
- ❀ Deciduous shrub, growing to a height of 6-15' and a width of 6-10'

Plant History

For centuries, flowering plants have been a critical part of agriculture and the human diet, whether it's been direct or indirect consumption. Potatoes, broccoli, beans, almonds, apples, and small grains such as wheat, oats, rice, barley, and rye are examples of such plants.

School of Botany

There are self-pollinating plants that require a pollen vector and there are those that do not. Cross pollination between different plants requires a pollen vector. Examples of pollen vectors are butterflies, birds, bees, wind, and water.